

Governance Concepts and their Application in Forest Policy Initiatives from Global to Local Levels

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Abstract In recent decades the concept of ‘governance’ as interdependent coordination of actors as well as the normative concept of ‘good governance’ have increasingly influenced international forest policy, to varying degrees. Using the three dimensions of multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level governance to analyse key aspects of governance in the follow-up of global policy after the UNCED conference in 1992, this paper shows that ‘multi-actor governance’ has received considerable attention in international forest policy, mainly through promoting national forest programs. Global forest policy initiatives were less able to develop concepts to address and improve ‘multi-sector governance’ and ‘multi-level governance’, although these two dimensions of governance are particularly relevant for local levels. A number of major international forest policy initiatives, both public and private, have also focused on improving various dimensions of ‘good governance’. A review of the degree to which these international governmental initiatives have been transposed and applied at the local or regional level reveals a major gap between concepts and forest policy initiatives developed and promoted at international and national levels and their application at the regional and local levels. This calls for better concepts addressing in particular the ‘multi-level’ dimension of governance in order to improve connectivity between these levels. A range of governance change approaches can be applied, including adjusting modes of interaction, instruments and institutions.

Keywords International forest policy · Local forest governance · Multi-level governance · Good governance · Policy evaluation

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Introduction

The overarching global political goal of international forest policy is sustainable forest management (SFM). Sustainable forest management is difficult to define and implement, and to measure in practice. Practitioners working on the implementation of development projects have consistently advocated that many of the national policies and international commitments made with a view to promote SFM can only be achieved through efforts at the local level¹ and inclusive of local communities and people living in, with or from forests. Measures to improve SFM have to fit local circumstances and to have strong local components. This is because they have to change outcomes in each particular locality in order to succeed. Yet the predominant approach to administer forest policies is top-down, using national policies and targeted funding, without adequate involvement and feedback mechanisms for those directly affected. What would be needed are feedback loops that allow better integration of information from local level actors, including local communities and private owners, in the decision-making process at national or international levels, and better means for local adaptation of policies. This could comprise more explicit attention to and support for the emergence of local level initiatives with a view to up-scale these to the national level. It could also mean more ‘pilot testing’ of national and international initiatives at local levels before formal agreements.

The top-down policy framework dominating today has often not worked well. Promoting the implementation of national and international forest-related commitments, policies and goals towards sustainable forest management means having to understand and adjust to the needs of thousands or millions of individuals, households and micro-enterprises (including farmers). The latter work within locally limited contexts, providing the majority of livelihoods and incomes in rural areas. A large proportion of these small-scale producers have no formal title or rights to the land resources on which their livelihoods depend, and often forest-based micro-businesses lack formal land titles on which most local production depends. This situation differs greatly from the more visible and recognized role of state forest administrations, large-scale forest management organizations and forest industry.

In addition to the difficulties of developing and implementing forest policies at various geographical levels, forests are affected by a multitude of activities and sectors, including by agriculture and infrastructure development. In fact, the level and diversity of pressures on forests seem to have increased during recent years, despite the build-up of international forest policy arrangements. Influences on forests and sustainable forest management by other than the forestry sector are sometimes summarized as ‘cross-sectoral’ issues, for lack of a better term. These comprise particularly those decisions that negatively affect forests but are made by other than the relevant state administrations responsible for forestry and forest conservation. Actors outside the forest sector, at local, regional and national levels,

¹ The ‘local’ level is understood here to refer to the smallest administrative unit in a country. This usually is a village or municipality. The term ‘regional’ is used to denote sub-national regions.

often either fail to see the value of forests or consider the benefits of forests as minor compared to the value of the projects they pursue.

There are many who argue that a sense of ‘local ownership’ or responsibility and a closer integration of non-forest activities affecting forests are essential factors for effective progress towards sustainable management of forests. Sustainable use of natural resources and management of ecosystems requires local institutions² (informal and formal) that both serve local populations and are based on detailed knowledge of the particulars of each locality. Yet, while successful forest management is intensely local, most policies, development actions and investments are planned, implemented and evaluated centrally by national governments and international agencies.

This paper reviews the development and implementation of governance concepts of the 1990s in forest policy initiatives at international³ and national levels. An assessment is made of the extent to which such governance concepts have been developed or adapted for application at the local and regional levels, in particular to support private forestry and adaptation of policies to local management practices, and to identify gaps in multi-level governance, from global to local levels. The review includes those initiatives that are concerned with forests and SFM as a whole, and explicitly take up at least one governance dimension in the conceptual framework.

Governance: Conceptual Frameworks

Growing awareness of complex realities in policy-making has led to the emergence of the concept of ‘governance’ (Pierre 2000). Governance and ‘new modes of governance’ have recently been widely studied in political science (e.g. Mayntz and Scharpf 1995; Heritier 2002; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Mayntz 2004; Benz 2004) as well as in forest policy (e.g. Hogl et al. 2008). Governance as a term and concept is defined differently by different proponents and users, with varying emphasis on institutions, legitimacy and power. Rosenau and Czempiel (1992) defined governance as a system of rule. Over time, the use of the term expanded from a system of rules and their enforcement to the process of how these rules are created (Benz 2004), emphasizing the role of public and private actors. As such, it is concerned with the management of interdependencies of networks of more or less independent actors (Benz 2004). Governance is understood as the process and the various structures and mechanisms to deal with a broad range of issues in which public as well as private actors regularly arrive at mutually satisfactory and binding decisions by negotiating with each other and co-operating in the implementation of these decisions. Governing is thus the production and enforcement of socially-binding decisions in a particular context.

² Institutions are defined by North (1990) as consist[ing] of formal rules, informal constraints—norms of behaviour, conventions, and self-imposed codes of conduct—and their enforcement characteristics. Institutions are often defined as the ‘rules of the game’.

³ The focus of the article with regard to “international forest policy” is on global forest policy as well as on European forest policy.

Over the last decade, ‘the [governance] revolution that no one noticed’ (Salamon 2002, p. 15) has deeply transformed the way governments and administrations work. With regard to international environmental and forest policy the underlying principles of Agenda 21 agreed by governments at UNCED in 1992 show that governments have recognized multiple dimensions as essential for policy-making in the follow-up of UNCED. These can be characterized as essentially three (non-normative) governance components, namely: multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level components (Jänicke and Joergensen 2006).

The belief in being able or having to develop and implement government policies through (only) government administrations top-down has increasingly broadened and given way to conceptualizing policy processes from the angle of ‘multiple-actor’ governance, especially in democratic, market-oriented societies. Multi-actor governance is operationalized here primarily as governance that encompasses both public and private actors. With increasingly complex governance challenges, co-ordination needs across sectors have become more evident, which is captured in the ‘multi-sector’ component of governance. Multi-sector governance is operationalized in this paper as encompassing various sections of government competencies. Especially relevant for the relation of international level and local level policy-making is the ‘multi-level’ component of governance, again operationalized in this paper as mainly relating to government agencies.

Apart from the non-normative concept of governance, a normative concept of ‘good governance’ has evolved. A number of bodies—including the UNDP, World Bank and OECD—have developed principles of good governance, which are nowadays used beyond the donor-related applications from which they mainly emerged. Since the early 1990s, the notion of good governance has gained widespread currency as a yardstick towards which institutional arrangements should develop. Today, most international organizations seem to have adopted fully the concept of good governance; its utilization reflects the general trend to incorporate political concerns into local development. In a broader sense the aim of good governance is to create mutually supportive and cooperative relationships among government, civil society and the private sector. The concept is thus similar to that of SFM, being multi-faceted and normative in character. Although there are a range of definitions, there is a wide consensus about the essential dimensions of good governance (Table 1).

International and National Forest Governance Initiatives

Following major international governance developments in the context of the Rio Summit in 1992 (UNCED 1992), international forest governance initiatives at global forest policy level became considerably more frequent than in previous decades, and took aspects of governance into account, in varying degrees. Table 2 provides an overview of international and national forest policy initiatives related to the three governance dimensions. It shows that not all dimensions of governance have been equally taken up and implemented in forest policy at international and

Table 1 The main dimensions of good governance

Dimension of good governance	Main characteristics
Rule of law	<i>Rule-based policy</i> , including law-abiding as well as impartial and equal treatment of similar cases by authorities
Accountability and transparency	<i>Accountability</i> of elected representatives, civil servants and those empowered by joint decisions to perform specific functions, public or private. <i>Transparency</i> through information sharing, clear decision-making procedures
Participation	<i>Participation</i> of organized and individual citizens (or empowered stakeholders) in public-sector decision-making (including partnership among all stakeholders); recognition of gender issues, minorities (an equity issue) and related <i>legitimacy of policies and policy making</i>
Effectiveness and efficiency	Effectiveness of authorities in achieving their objectives and efficiency and in managing their public resources

Table 2 Governance concepts applied in forest policy initiatives at global and national levels

Governance concept	Global forest policy	National forest policy
Multi-actor governance	‘Multi-stakeholder dialogue’	‘National forest programs’
Multi-sector governance	No major initiative	Partly national forest programs
Multi-level governance	No major initiative	No major initiative

national levels. All initiatives listed in Table 2 were developed at international forest policy levels.

Multi-Actor Governance at International and National Levels

During the negotiations towards a potentially legally binding global instrument for all types of forests in the follow-up of the Rio Summit, it has become increasingly clear to negotiating countries that government-led forest policies and initiatives are better accepted and more widely adhered to if stakeholders are involved in the development of such policies. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were increasingly invited and agreed to participate in international forest policy processes, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) 1995–1997, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) 1997–2000 and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) commencing in 2000. As in other UN fora, ‘multi-stakeholder dialogues’ were set up as routine and integral mechanisms of international forest policy meetings, organized into nine ‘major groups’ as identified in Chapter 23 of Agenda 21 in 1992 (UN 1993). Likewise, the main forest policy platform in Europe, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), actively welcomed NGOs to the process and its regular meetings, implementing a ‘Multi-stakeholder component’ for the first time in its 2003 conference. NGO participation at meetings of the major international forest policy fora has been established practice since the establishment of MCPFE in 1990 and

UNFF in 2000. Formal multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions have been held since 2003 in the MCPFE and UNFF major meetings. Thus stakeholders have the opportunity to express directly their opinions to governmental decision-makers in an open forum. This does not mean, however that they co-decide with governments on the agreements.

At national level the multi-actor governance concept, termed ‘stakeholder participation’, was likewise taken up, following the agreements amongst governments in Chapter 11 (Combating Deforestation) of Agenda 21 ‘to prepare and implement, as appropriate, national forestry action programmes and/or plans for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests’ (UN 1993, para 11.12.b). Subsequently, the respective IPF proposals-for-action specifications listed stakeholder participation as an essential element of national forest programs. National governments implementing their commitments by establishing national forest policy statements (NFPS) subsequently address stakeholder participation. Not surprisingly, however, there often remains a gap between stated intentions and actions in regard to improving participation. Also in Europe, where most countries had developed a national forest program by 2007, stakeholder participation has in many cases been taken up in a more or less formal and symbolic way, often with some success (Rametsteiner et al. 2007).

In addition to these government-dominated international forest governance arrangements, private governance initiatives, such as forest certification schemes, have brought about a new transnational network-type of governance of forests. Government openness to such private activities indicates that these are recognized as a complementary form of governance by governments (Glück et al. 2005).

In summary, particularly at international levels the concept of multi-actor governance and ‘stakeholder participation’ in forest policy-making has been comparatively well established and is increasingly formalized. There is a high variability in establishing the concept, however, at national level, with quite variability of formalization also across Europe (as discussed in Rametsteiner et al. 2007).

Multi-Sector Governance at International and National Levels

‘Cross-sectoral’ co-ordination and collaboration has increasingly been recognized as an area where current policy approaches and institutional structures need to be adapted, at both international and national levels. At global level, the IPF/IFF proposals for action from the late 1990s place little emphasis on cross-sector coordination, nor do the UNFF past or current multi-year programs of work 2000–2005 or 2007–2015. If multi-sector governance is considered as co-ordination and collaboration across largely differing but related sections of government competencies, the only initiative that could be considered as working at least to some degree from a multi-sector perspective is the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). The CPF was established in 2001, as an informal, voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial programs on forests. CPF is based on the informal agreement of its members to collaborate and to coordinate activities of the independent bodies forming the CPF. It has neither an executive role nor a separate budget and is thus entirely dependent on the goodwill

of the individual collaborating parties. There is no mechanism at global level that would directly link major related policy fields, such as agriculture, energy, tourism and water. In European forest policy, the MCPFE addressed cross-sectoral governance in 2003 by merging the topic with the commitments to national forest programs in the MCPFE Vienna Resolution 1.

At national levels, national forest programs were and are intended to serve as a platform for cross-sector co-ordination in those countries where such processes exist. However, while the participation of stakeholders in forest policy-making has worked rather well in many instances, it is often been found difficult to engage with and involve other sectors on a more continuous basis (Dubé and Schmithüsen 2007). Unlike recognized stakeholders, other sectors do not necessarily see themselves as having a 'stake' in forest-related matters. Forest-related issues are often temporary, of comparatively minor importance, or both. Effective cross-sectoral co-ordination and collaboration is thus still an important governance issue for sustainable forest management. A recent review in Europe showed that for NFP processes, strengthening cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration is frequently seen as a significant element in NFPS, [but ???] with limited activities (Rametsteiner et al. 2007; MCPFE 2007).

In summary, in international forest policy at global level, in Europe, and in national forest policy, multi-sector governance has been taken up rather slowly following its promotion by UNCED in 1992. There has been limited progress in terms of formalizing multi-sector governance in established structures or procedures.

Multi-Level Governance at International and National Levels

At both global and European levels, governance across the various levels of government administration has so far received the least attention of the three components of governance (multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level). While in particular 'local communities' are referred to throughout the IPF and the IFF proposals for action, there have been no initiatives at global level to establish direct or indirect communication or collaboration channels with local-level governance structures. At the national level, to which most of the IPF and IFF proposals for action are addressed, no major mechanism has been devised as a widely shared and implemented approach, to improve or change national to regional and local (and vice versa) governance arrangements. In other words, while a common format was found to strengthen multi-actor governance in the form of the national forest program concept, a similar concept is missing for multi-level governance. One of the likely consequences is the often low level of implementation of national policies and international commitments with regard to sustainable forest management in practice, and the resulting low effectiveness and efficiency of sustainable forest management policy implementation.

'Good governance' at International and National Levels

Improving governance for SFM at national levels has been on the agenda over the last decade in both national and international forest policy fora. Many of the key

good-governance dimensions have been addressed in international processes. Tools developed in international processes that address good-governance dimensions, to be applied mainly on the national level, were not directly elaborated with a view to promote individual components of good governance. Rather, they emerged separately, responding to specific needs in the various governance areas. Nonetheless, these usually build on the notion of multi-actor governance, and some also incorporate the intention to improve multi-sector governance.

Three of the four main dimensions of good governance are addressed by specific initiatives at international forest policy level. The rule of law is the focus of geo-regional 'forest law enforcement and governance' (FLEG) processes that were initiated in the early 2000s by governments, largely outside the UN system. With regard to accountability and transparency, a total of nine regional 'criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management' processes have evolved in the follow-up to UNCED 1992. In addition, countries are requested to report on the implementation of forest-related commitments made at global agreements (including IPF/IFF, UNFF, and the Convention on Biological Diversity CBD) and at the geo-regional level (e.g. MCPFE in Europe). However, evidence reveals that reporting on implementation is not done in practice by most countries for global commitments, and only partly at European level (Rametsteiner et al. 2007). A major global private initiative to strengthen accountability and transparency is forest certification. Unlike the other initiatives, this approach aims to improve forest management, through enhanced accountability, directly at the local and regional level.

National forest programs are the main mechanism to strengthen participation. All of the initiatives reported above are intended to contribute in some way to improve governance effectiveness and efficiency, but there are no specific international forest-policy initiatives to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency by developing and widely applying a common conceptual approach. Especially in developing countries, the general trend of decentralization and devolution of power to lower levels of government has also been implemented in forest competencies. Only in a limited number of countries, including Tanzania, has forest administration been seen as a key driver. According to Larson (2004), about half of the countries of the world were deemed to be engaged in the early 2000s in processes towards decentralization of their forest sector. In Europe, however, few countries were engaged in decentralization or devolution processes in 2007 (Rametsteiner et al. 2007).

As Table 3 shows, three of the four main good-governance dimensions have been taken up explicitly by international forest policy initiatives, whereby common global or geo-regional approaches have been developed and are implemented by countries in a more or less co-ordinated way in national forest policies. Governance effectiveness and efficiency have been addressed at international forest policy levels mainly through creating the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, with the intention to improve co-ordination among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial forestry programs. However, no international forest policy framework or concept has been developed for implementation at national forest policy level, as is the case for the other good-governance dimensions. Enhancement of governance

Table 3 Good-governance dimensions and related international forest policy initiatives

Good governance dimension	International forest policy initiatives focusing on respective good governance dimension
1. Rule of law	'Forest law enforcement and governance' (FLEG) processes (geo-regional processes)
2. Accountability and transparency	'Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management' processes; (geo-regional processes)
3. Participation	Multi-stakeholder dialogue and national forest programs
4. Governance effectiveness and efficiency	Collaborative Partnership on Forests

effectiveness and efficiency was one of the main drivers for decentralization and devolution oriented governance reforms, which were developed outside forest policy, but implemented in national forest policies in a large number of countries (Larson 2004). In addition to the initiatives listed in Table 3 there are many forest-related initiatives focusing on specific topics of SFM (e.g. biodiversity protection) that include some elements of good governance in their concepts.

Issues, Initiatives and Gaps in Local and Regional Forest Governance

The three key dimensions of forest governance (multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level), are as relevant at the local and regional levels as they are at national and international levels. Governance at local and regional levels has become more of an issue with the continuing changes in forest tenure and institutional arrangements, because these have led to increased involvement of more diverse stakeholders in forest management. This concerns both more private (individual or collective) forms of ownership as well as local communal forest ownership or management. Depending on the national context, the variety of groups that need to be considered and represented in local forest governance arrangements varies considerably. For instance, wherever small private forest owners are involved, key governance arrangements usually need to be built up at regional levels to serve better the local needs.

Good governance of forests at the local level is evidently also important at local and regional levels, given that actual forest management implementation decisions are taken at these levels. Good local forest governance is related to the organizations and procedures intended to manage local forest-related issues. This can be local public service delivery by district forest offices, as well as administrative arrangements for managing local, village and municipal forests. Local democratic governance is supposed to address efficiently a large number of key issues related to the good-governance dimensions (as listed in Table 1).

Table 4 provides an overview of the few international forest policy initiatives targeted directly at local and regional levels. The table shows that only two forest policy initiatives are directly address local and regional levels, namely forest certification and the Model Forest Network. The focus of the former is to strengthen

Table 4 Good governance initiatives in forest policy targeted directly at local and regional levels

Good governance dimension	Forest policy initiatives targeted directly at local and regional levels	International forest policy initiatives adapted to and applied at local and regional levels
1. Rule of law	Forest certification	FLEG processes
2. Accountability and transparency	Forest certification	Local or regional C&I or related guidelines
	Model forest network	
3. Participation	Forest certification	None
	Model forest network	
4. Governance effectiveness and efficiency	Model forest network	None

accountability and transparency, while also emphasizing participation and adherence to the rule of law. The Model Forest Network, while reinforcing other dimensions of good governance, is considered (by the author) to focus mainly on governance effectiveness and efficiency. There are few international forest policy initiatives that have been adapted for application at local and regional levels. These are initiatives within FLEG processes as well as regional criteria and indicators for SFM or forest management unit guidelines, such as the MCPFE Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for SFM. Table 4 lists only those major initiatives that are concerned with forests and sustainable forest management as a whole. A large number of further initiatives exist that are targeted at specific forest-related issues, address the local and regional levels, and explicitly take up some governance dimensions in their concepts (e.g. forest restoration, local forest-based economic development).

Multi-Actor Governance at Local and Regional Levels

Multi-actor governance, which at a national level is one of the key elements embedded in the national forest program, often differs at local and regional as distinct from the national level. At national level, in many countries, individual stakeholders are often associated into institutional bodies that allow their views to be heard in national policy processes. This includes forest industry and business, international and national environmental NGOs, and in some countries the representatives of private forest owners and community forestry. At regional and local levels, interest groups representing individual stakeholders through one voice are much less common. Structures, rules and processes to deal with different and often conflicting interests are likewise inexistent or less well developed. Moreover, interests in forests are often voiced from other than forestry stakeholders. Particularly at local levels, forest policy decision-makers thus often deal with individuals, and individually, rather than through some formal processes. They are likely to deal with the more powerful individuals and their interest, and the less powerful but possibly equally or more affected have more difficulty in being heard. Forest-related policy making (i.e. operational decisions on often national policy implementation across a wider range of policy areas) at this level is considerably

more diversified, with virtually millions of units to study. Multi-actor governance is considerably more difficult in cases of small-scale forest property and high shares of private forest ownership. This is further aggravated in areas where many of the private forest owners are not actual inhabitants of the locality where their forests lie, which is increasingly the case in many, if not most countries in Europe.

One forest policy initiative explicitly promoting multi-actor governance and being directly targeted at local and regional levels is the 'Model Forest' initiative, initially developed by the Canadian Forest Service in the early 1990s (LaPierre 2002). A Model Forest is considered a geographic area and a specific broad-based local partnership approach to sustainable forest management amongst all stakeholders with an interest in their area's natural resources.

Multi-Sector Governance at Local and Regional Levels

The aspect of multi-sectoral governance deserves particular attention at local and regional levels. What seems to distinguish the local and regional levels from the national level in that the former have to interact frequently with institutions outside the forest sector, with administrations from other sectors and respective interested individuals and groups. This includes actors from many sectors and strands of local life, including agriculture, forest-based industries, the energy sector, infrastructure development, and tourism. Cross-sectoral collaboration is indeed daily business for institutions at the district and provincial level. However, this multi-sector governance seems often driven by ad hoc necessity in daily management, with the aim to adhere to the legal and procedural requirements from the various sectoral competent authorities. Such governance across sectoral competences seems usually not to be based on clear national or federal level guidelines. Local and regional level administrations are largely required to act autonomously and to build informal self-organizing and interacting networks to cope with emerging issues at these levels, and to learn from experience from other local administrations in similar decision situations.

Multi-sector governance thus requires not only more attention at national level, but even more so at local and regional levels. Cross-sector governance is particularly difficult in cases of small-scale forest property in private forest ownership, where the need to co-ordinate between public and private bodies, and more actors, adds to the challenge. Some authors have pointed out that the few well-developed and more widely applied concepts of multi-sector governance in a local forest-related setting emerged in countries where the forest industry is forest tenure holder, such as in the Canadian Model Forest initiative (Hall and Bonnell 2004).

Multi-Level Governance at Local and Regional Levels

Because the local and regional contexts for forest policy implementation are highly diverse in many or most countries, regional or local adaptation of national forest policies is essential to achieve intended outcomes. Furthermore, the often increasing number of requests to set policy measures at local or regional levels towards sustainable forest management requires considerable local and regional capacity.

This cannot be achieved by understaffed and under-funded local or regional administrative units alone. Moreover, stakeholders play increasingly visible roles not only at national level, but also at regional and local levels. In addition, in order to achieve locally acceptable policies that are feasible to implement, policy-making structures and processes need mechanisms that enable better responsiveness to local and regional level issues. The traditional and still prevailing view that hierarchical top-down administration of national policies and related institutional structures is enough, particular for international forest policy implementation, is not adequate. However, bottom-up concepts for multi-level governance starting from local and regional levels to national levels and further to international levels are rare. Given the lack of explicit concepts to link levels of government from international to local, the widely perceived lack of implementation – especially of international commitments but often also national policies – aiming to promote progress towards SFM, should not come as a surprise.

Good Governance at Local and Regional Levels

Local good governance needs to address a large number of key issues, including adherence to a broad range of laws and regulations from various sectors, the weak contact between government and local people (including civil society and the private sector), appropriate accountability and transparency of government administration to the local population (including forest owners or stakeholders), and the limitations of efficiency and effectiveness of centralized planning and management.

While many good-governance dimensions are covered through new means and instruments at international and national levels, most of these instruments have little or no conceptual or consistent relation to the local and regional levels. Strengthening the rule of law in many cases addresses national level issues, but often also focuses on regional hot spots. Accountability and transparency have received considerably less attention at local or regional levels, compared to the national level, with regard to forest administration. The most important initiatives to strengthen accountability and transparency at local levels so far have been private forest certification initiatives. These have been instrumental in bringing a number of good governance concepts to the forest management unit and to the regional level. Likewise, some minimum form of stakeholder participation at local and regional levels has possibly been more widely promoted through forest certification than through governmental administration initiatives. However, a number of government-led initiatives have further elaborated international criteria and indicator sets related to SFM to elaborate local forest management unit level indicator sets. The most advanced concepts possibly have been developed in the context of the ITTO on Forest Management Unit level indicators for application in the tropics as well as the ‘Local Level Indicator’ work in Model Forest initiatives.

With regard to governance efficiency and effectiveness, many governments have promoted decentralization and devolution. Most cases of decentralization and devolution can be classified into three basic types of approaches, as identified by Fisher et al. (2000). In the first type, governments seek public participation in (generally) large-scale programs, with centrally set objectives (e.g. national forest

programs). The second type involves the decentralization of forest management roles from central government to district-level or local government, but not to local communities and private owners. The third approach involves the handing over of a substantial amount of control to local communities or individuals. In the case of forests, these can for example be village organizations supported by sectoral departments (e.g. Village Forest Committees), organizations or authorities outside the state hierarchy (e.g. traditional authority, residents' associations), or corporate organizations at the village level (e.g. trusts, conservancies, property associations). This third approach has been widely discussed rhetorically, but there are few working examples in relation to forests. In many cases where control over forests was handed over, the forests have been degraded and thus are of limited economic importance for central governments. While the decentralization trends were seen as promising at the start of many such decentralization and devolution initiatives, many have encountered major challenges. Issues related to decentralization have recently been addressed by research, including on related experiences with regard to tenure and property rights, accountability, local-level asset assessment and participatory planning and decision-making (for example, see Enters et al. 2000; Shackleton et al. 2002; UN 2004; Colfer and Capistrano 2005; Ribot 2004).

Discussion: Local to International Connectivity in Forest Governance

The commitments agreed at UNCED 1992, including Agenda 21, have evidently been a major reference point, driver and conceptual source for international forest policy initiatives over the last 15 years. International forest policy in turn has provided major impulses and concepts for national-level policy making, and has helped shape national forest policy initiatives across countries, to varying degrees. In other words, national forest policy has been influenced in a top-down fashion, from international to national. However, as the review has shown, many of these concepts have failed to progress beyond the national level, and practically no conceptual approach of the various dimensions of governance or good governance developed by governments in an international or national forest policy context has been transferred to and widely applied at regional or local levels.

Looking at the period since UNCED 1992, comparatively few initiatives were devised that directly addressed regional or local levels, but these seem to have been relatively successful conceptually, given that both forest certification and model forests are still expanding their global reach two decades after their initial launch. It is interesting to note that forest certification is a private initiative, and the Canadian model forest concept is based on leadership from within a core group of local stakeholders (Hall and Bonnell 2004). In other words, government agencies have taken a back seat in both initiatives.

Why is implementation of governance concepts below the national level at regional or local levels evidently limited? It seems there is a widespread 'veil of ignorance' between international level and local level actors towards the concepts and initiatives of the other. There is a large number of factors that theoretical schools would identify to explain this gap, including the willingness to engage in

initiatives developed elsewhere, the power and capacity to do so, costs involved, and the interest of and time needed for local communities to take up, develop and make visible independent initiatives.

Policy means and approaches to improve governance, in the relation and connectivity between international and local forest governance, are available in all three main approaches of intervention (instrumental, interactive and institutional). The instrumental approach places a focus on legal, economic and informational policy interventions. The interactive approach emphasizes improving co-operation and interactions between individuals and organizations to reach satisficing policies by consensus. The institutional approach focuses on changing institutional and network structures and arrangements with a view to institutionalizing key interests and relationships and thereby achieving more stable governance in the long term. Mixed models of the various approaches to policy change have been proposed and applied in forest policy contexts, for example by Kouplevatskaya-Yunusova and Buttoud (2006).

Preferred policy interventions will differ depending on the area of governance in question, as well as the degree of intended change. For instance, transparency is often considerably increased by using informational instruments or by promoting better means of interaction. Over the longer term, deeper institutional change would be needed in order to change the culture of interaction between levels of government and with citizens. Changing governance arrangements profoundly is more often than not a process that is difficult to implement according to a set plan, and controlling all outcomes is hardly possible at all. Deep institutional change can sometimes occur quickly, for example through a crisis, such as war, or through change of leadership, bringing in new ideas. More typically, change is a slow and more or less deliberate and difficult process of changing the rules.

Conclusions

Governance and new modes of governance have recently been widely studied in political science and, mainly due to forest certification as well as national forest program processes, also in forest-related political science. Rather coincidentally, also in international forest policy the term ‘governance’ has received much attention over recent years, due to the growing recognition of illegal logging as a pervasive threat to forests and to sustainable forest management. However, as the acronym FLEG quite accurately expresses, improving broader aspects of governance is secondary compared to the strong focus on strengthening forest law enforcement. In fact, although offering a considerable number of important lessons and measures, governance has hardly been recognized and discussed in forest policy as a relevant policy concept, at global, national or local levels.

None of the key components of governance are particularly new. In fact, neither in forest-related political science nor in practice has the concept of governance at local levels received much attention. This is despite the fact that it is at the local level where a large number of higher level decisions can be implemented, ignored or contradicted, for the better or the worse for forests. However, it is notable that most

of the components of governance have built up separate long-standing research traditions. In particular, for local forest management, improved multi-level governance requires policies and related mechanisms and instruments that allow better interaction between the various levels of government and related actors. This should improve the responsiveness of national level policies to local and regional level issues as input to international level forest policy development as well as to better ways for promoting adjustment of national policies to local and regional contexts in their implementation.

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